

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 /099 W  
-----077902 111212Z /43

R 110903Z SEP 78  
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6706  
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
AMEMBASSY DAKAR  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 5537

EO 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, FR, SS, AG  
SUBJ: FRENCH AMBASSADOR ON MAURITANIA AND THE SAHARA PROBLEM

REF: RABAT 5347

1. FRENCH AMBASSADOR JEAN HERLY SHARED HIS THOUGHTS WITH ME IN A SEPTEMBER 8 DISCUSSION ON MAURITANIA AND THE SAHARA PROBLEM. HE NOTED, AS HAD FRENCH EMBOFF IN REFTEL, THAT THE POLISARIO WAS NOW IN DE FACTO CONTROL OF THE MAURITANIAN SECTION OF THE SAHARA. THE REAL POLISARIO TARGET, SAID HERLY, WAS MAURITANIA ITSELF. THE POLISARIO BEGUN TO STEP UP CRITICISM OF THE CMRN, WERE ABLE TO MOVE ABOUT THE COUNTRY WITH GREAT EASE AND HAD ALREADY BEGUN A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AMONG THE POPULATION OF THE MAURITANIAN SAHARA AND IN NORTHERN MAURITANIA. HERLY'S PREDICTION WAS THAT IT WAS LIKELY THAT THE POLISARIO COULD TAKE OVER IN NOUAKCHOTT IN TWO YEARS.

2. THE BIG QUESTION IN HERLY'S MIND WAS WHAT MOROCCO'S  
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REACTION WOULD BE TO A MOVE TOWARD A POLISARIO TAKE-OVER IN MAURITANIA. HE NOTED THAT MOROCCO'S POSSIBILITIES WERE LIMITED NOT ONLY BY THE ENORMOUS DIFFICULTY OF OPERATING IN MAURITANIA BUT ALSO THE EXPECTATION THAT SENGHOR AND OTHERS (INCLUDING THE FRENCH) WOULD TAKE A DIM VIEW OF ANY MOROCCAN ATTEMPT TO FORESTALL A POLISARIO TAKEOVER BY MOVING

IN THEMSELVES.

3. HERLY SAID THERE HAD BEEN VERY LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE ACCOMPLISHED BETWEEN GUEDIRA AND BOUTEFLIKA AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OF A RESUMPTION OF THOSE CONTACTS. THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN BOUMEDIENE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SITUATION, AND IN HERLY'S OPINION NO REASON FOR BOUMEDIENE TO ADOPT A MORE CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TOWARD MOROCCO IN VIEW OF THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE POLISARIO'S POSITION. HE STRESSED THAT THE FRENCH HAD NO INTENTION OF UNDERTAKING A MEDIATION ROLE, SINCE THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME FOR THE FRENCH WOULD BE GETTING KNOCKED AROUND BY PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT.

4. HERLY SAID THAT THE MORALE OF MOROCCAN FORCES IN THE SAHARA WAS SAGGING. SOME OF THE TROOPS HAD BEEN THERE FOR TWO YEARS AND THERE WERE TOO FEW NON-COMS AND OFFICERS. THE PRESENT INCIDENT ON THE BORDER IN TATA PROVINCE HAD BEEN A SEVERE BLOW, WITH 75 MOROCCANS KILLED. TWO INVADERS WERE CAPTURED, BUT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WERE ALGERIANS OR THAT ALGERIAN REGULAR TROOPS WERE INVOLVED, DESPITE MOROCCAN CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY. ANDERSON

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## Message Attributes

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**Concepts:** POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, AMBASSADORS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Subject:** FRENCH AMBASSADOR ON MAURITANIA AND THE SAHARA PROBLEM  
**TAGS:** PEPR, FR, SS, AG, (HERLY, JEAN), (ANDERSON, ROBERT)  
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